

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 542

By Pitts

A RESOLUTION to urge Congress to revise No Child Left Behind standards relative to special education students and graduation rates.

WHEREAS, extensive new standards-based education reform measures in the United States were established with passage by the U.S. Congress of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and

WHEREAS, included among these standards was the establishment of a new formula to calculate high school graduation rates at individual schools with the intent to standardize methodologies across states and to provide more consistency in reporting and comparisons across states; and

WHEREAS, under such provision, a high school must calculate a “four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate,” defined as the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students that form the adjusted cohort for that graduating class; and

WHEREAS, the term “regular high school diploma” means the standard high school diploma that is awarded to students in the State and that is fully aligned with the State’s academic content standards or a higher diploma and does not include a GED® credential, certificate of attendance, or any alternative diploma or award; and

WHEREAS, a special education student who does not graduate with a regular high school diploma, but instead receives an alternative diploma, certificate of completion, or other degree or certificate that is not fully aligned with the State’s academic content standards may not be counted as graduating in calculating the graduation rate and thus is considered a “drop out” for statistical purposes; and

WHEREAS, the vast majority of special education students in this country finish high school upon the completion of their individualized education programs (IEP), as authorized under the guidelines of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and

WHEREAS, to classify such students as "drop outs" without any consideration of the hard work and effort put forth by special education students to complete their individual education programs is extremely inappropriate and unjustified; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby urge Congress to revise the high school graduation requirements contained in No Child Left Behind so that special education students who do not receive a regular high school diploma will not be required to be counted as "drop outs" in graduation rate formulas and thus avoid undue harm to individual students and their high school.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chief Clerk of the House is directed to prepare and transmit an appropriately enrolled copy of this resolution to every member of the Tennessee Congressional delegation.